

Songs of the Seasons

(Garnett)



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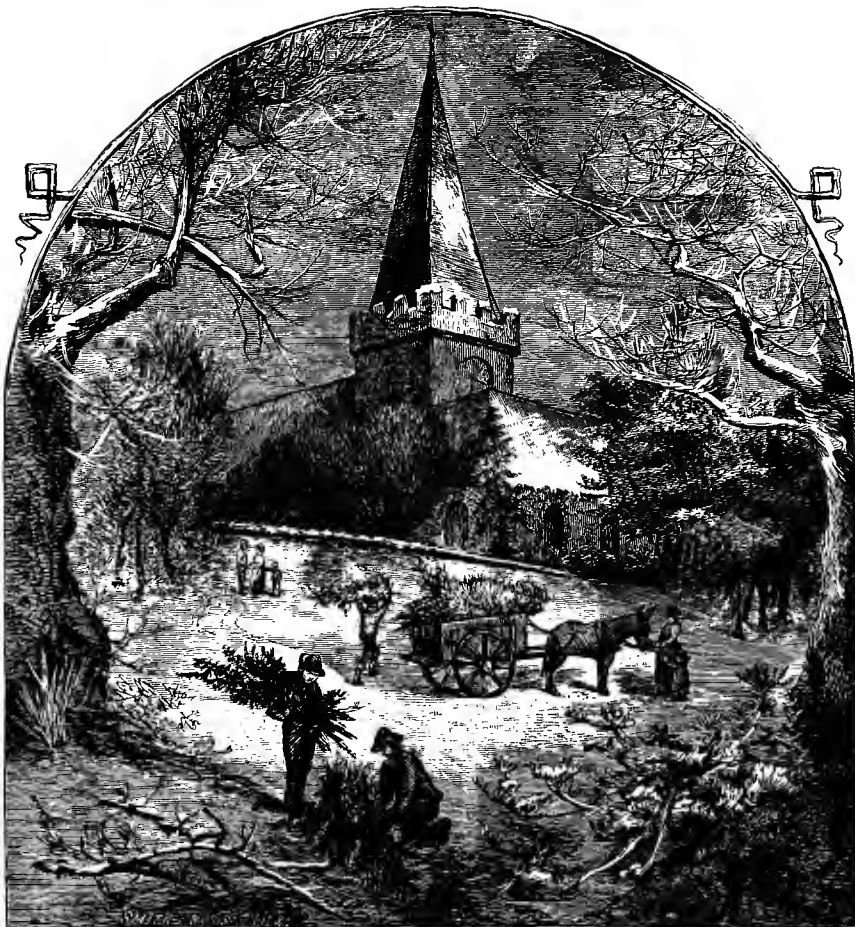
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Songs of the seasons.



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*'Tis Christmas! the old Church-tower
Is draped in drifted snow.*

(The Wreathers, p. 43.)

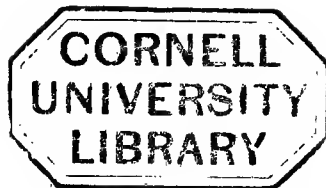
Songs OF THE Seasons.

BY
HENRY F. DARNELL, D. D.
RECTOR ZION CHURCH,
AVON, N. Y.

[Handwritten signature]

RP

A. 2 1853



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DEDICATION.

To thee, dear child—in Heaven—
Who on thy father's toil no more shalt smile,
These flowers—in memory given—
May, like those spread above thy dust, awhile
Some few fast-fleeting hours of care beguile,
And die at even ;
But if, to that serene atmosphere
In which thou dwell'st, their leaves, though sere,
May waft one parting breath
Ere they have perished from this lower sphere,—
They will have conquered death.



The Coming Year.

ANOTHER year has glided o'er,
Of mingled bliss and sorrow ;
Its beams and clouds return no more
To gild or shroud the morrow.
'Tis gone, 'tis gone beyond recall !
Like nightly vision vanished :
Soon will its lingering traces all,
By fresher scenes be banished.

Fair flowers will wreathe the new-raised tomb

Where some loved form is sleeping,

And solace with their fragrant bloom

The hearts now sore with weeping :

Array'd in smiles will be the cheek

Where sorrow's rills are streaming ;

Whilst eyes which deepest woe bespeak,

Will soon with joy be beaming.

Once more o'er all the verdant plain—

Throughout earth's fragrant bowers,

Will Spring resume her transient reign,

And ope the budding flowers ;

Fair types of human hopes, whose smile

Deluded bosoms cherish,—

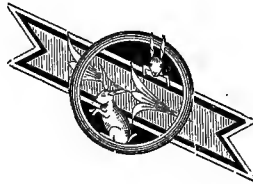
Ah ! doom'd, like these; to bloom awhile,

And then to fade and perish.

Next, Summer will display her charms,
As time is onward creeping ;
And Autumn bare her sunburnt arms
To gather in her reaping ;
Ere Winter comes with hurrying feet
To veil the wreck of nature,
And, with her snowy winding-sheet,
To shroud each withered feature.

Those anxious aims for fame and gain,
But formed to be defeated ;
That chequered round of varied pain,
Again will be repeated ;
Until, released, our heads have pressed
The dreamless death-bed pillow,
Like weary sea-birds sunk to rest
On life's expended billow.

The warrior's pride—the statesman's care—
Each sigh for pomp or pow'r,
Will wake no answering echo there,
In that calm, peaceful hour ;
But each bright deed of faith and love,
Their holy radiance blending,
Will crown the saint, to realms above
On angel wings ascending.





Under the Snow.

UNDER the snow—four foot low—
I laid a child to rest ;
Her form was chill, her lips were still—
No pulse within her breast :
In her eye no light, and her brow as white
As the flowers her fingers pressed.

Under the snow—four foot low—
That tiny form was laid ;
The feeble ray of a winter day
Above her lightly played ;
And a little mound of frozen ground
Was all the tribute paid.

Under the snow—four foot low—
I left that sleeping child ;
But Spring came round, with merry sound,
And the air was fresh and mild ;
The grass waved green where the snow had been,
And the birds sang sweet and wild.

. .

Still, under the snow—cold and low—
She lies in my memory ;
For no earthly Spring can ever bring
My darling back to me ;
I ne'er can hear that voice so dear— .
That light step bounding free !

Thus, under the snow—four foot low—
That form still silent lies ;
But a Spring shall shine, and a voice divine
Shall one day bid it rise ;
So I will not weep, for the angels keep
That grave in their loving eyes.

When earth and its snow, beneath the glow
Of that Spring, shall melt away,
That form shall rise beyond the skies,
And bask in Heaven's ray—
Shall re-unite with the spirit bright
Which left it lifeless clay.





Bury me at Easter.

CH ! bury me at Easter,
For I shall surely rise,
Gladly as yonder skylark
Mounts upward to the skies ;
Only to Heaven's bright portals
He soars on shining wing,
But, ever blest, *within* then
My soul shall ceaseless sing.

Oh ! bury me at Easter ;
Lay out my corse with care,
Bind it in snowy linen,
Deck it with flow'rets fair ;
“ In hope of the Resurrection,”
That cold, unlovely clay
Is the tabernacle holy
Of a spirit passed away.

Oh ! bury me at Easter,
For who can shed a tear
When Earth with mirth and beauty
Greets the unfolding year ?
I would not those who love me
Should grieve for me and weep,
When the breath of a sweeter Springtide
Hath pass'd o'er my spirit's sleep.

Oh ! bury me at Easter,
For fragrant flowers will bloom,
And wreath with soft caresses
Their arms about my tomb,
Chanting the resurrection
E'en of the mouldering dust,
Which Earth, till the Second Advent,
Must hold in faithful trust.

Oh ! bury me at Easter ;
I would leave earth for Heaven,
When to the Church triumphant
The risen Christ was given ;
When to her earth-built temples
She calls to praise and prayer,—
On the sweet Easter Sabbath
Would I meet my Saviour *there*.

Oh ! bury me at Easter ;
I could not fear to die
With Joseph's vacant sepulchre
Before my failing eye ;
With the Church's " hallelujahs "
Sounding from either sphere,
Why should I linger midway ?
My God, I come !—I hear !





Seed-Time.

LIFE is thy seed-time, brother man,
The soil is ready and meet ;
The time before thee is but a span,
But the furrows are under thy feet.
Freely did'st thou of thy Lord receive,
Mercy and pity and love ;
Freely, then, of thy fulness give,
Sow now, and reap above !

Gaze on these shivering sons of want,
Hungry and chill and bare,
With famish'd eyes, with clothing scant,
And wild, neglected air ;
Here scatter thy seed and it shall bring
Fruit to a hundred-fold ;
From deserts as barren as this shall spring
More than thy barns can hold.

See yonder pale mother tending her charge,
With faded and care-worn cheek ;
Slender her means, her family large,
Her husband ailing and weak ;
She will not stoop to the beggar's trade,
But work on till she drop—
A few seeds here of kindly aid,
Will yield thee a noble crop.

A felon lies in yon darken'd cell,
 Brooding in silence grim ;
To-morrow will ring his dying knell,—
 Hast thou no seed for him ?
Not a pitying tear ? not a word of hope ?
 Not an interceding pray'r ?
Before the grip of the strangling rope
 Launches his spirit—where ?

Go, Christian sower—go bravely forth !
 Be love thy precious seed ;
Go East and West ! Go South and North !
 For pressing is the need ;
There are wounded spirits and hopeless breasts,
 And cheeks ne'er free from tears ;
There are minds where ignorance deeply rests,
 Together with slavish fears ;

Where'er thou turnest thy wand'ring feet,
Through this sad world below,
There is plenty of soil ready and meet
For that thou hast to sow.

Sow not through love of this world's pelf,
Nor for man's approving nod ;
Sow not through a paltry love of self,
But sow through a love to God !
See, too, Brother, thy seed be cast
Not with a niggardly hand,
That thou may'st reap, when thy toils are past,
On the plains of the promised land.





May-Day Song.



HAPPY day ! O bright May-day !

Sweet herald of the Spring ;

Come, girt with golden promises,

And Hope's fair blossoming :

Thou Earth, be green—ye Skies, serene,

To greet our Queen !

Give flowers to grace her youthful brow,

Soft turf beneath her feet ;

Let heaven be musical with songs

Of wild-birds, soft and sweet :

Thou Earth be green—ye Skies, serene,

To deck our Queen !

Bring sunny hours of joy and love
To cheer the course of life ;
Make free her path from thorny cares,
Give peace when storms are rife :
Thou Earth be green—ye Skies, serene,
To bless our Queen !

Alas ! that crowns like these should fade,
And early ties be broken—
The bitterest word of all—“ farewell ”—
By loving lips be spoken :
When youth is gone, and life is sére,
And changed the festive scene,
Thou Earth be green—ye Skies, serene,
To bless our Queen !





The Elements at Strife.

THE Elements once met,—
The wide-spread Earth, and Sea,
And azure Sky,—
And high the contest rose
For mastery.

Each pleaded well her cause—
Fair Earth, and sounding Sea,
And lofty Sky ;
But neither one would bow
Her spirit high.

Earth moved in varied sheen,
In foam-flecked green, the Sea ;
The glorious Sky
Was robed in mystic folds
Of drapery.

“He fashioned me,” said Earth ;
“And me,” echoed the Sea ;
“And me, the Sky,
He made to veil
His majesty.”

“I have sweet flowers,” said Earth ;
“I have rare pearls,” the Sea ;
“And I, the Sky
Have myriad stars which gleam
Eternally.”

“ Mountains have I,” said Earth ;
“ I, giant waves,” the Sea ;
“ And I, the Sky,
Look down on mount and wave
Triumphantly.”

“ Christ moved on me,” said Earth ;
“ And trod my waves,” the Sea ;
“ And I, the Sky,
Rang on His natal day
With minstrelsy.”

“ I bore His cross,” said Earth ;
“ I waft His Word,” the Sea ;
“ And I, the Sky,
Bore Him on pinions light
To bliss on high.”

Peace, beauteous Earth,
And far-resounding Sea,
And glorious Sky :
His Name let all unite
To glorify !





Harvest Teachings.

THE meadows lay in the sunlight,
And the ruddy grain was ripe,
And fell before the reapers
With the keen scythe in their gripe ;
A thousand soft low murmurs
Hung on the balmy air,
And at intervals came the deadly rush
That laid the corn-fields bare.

Under the hazel hedgerow
 Loitered a little maid,
Bright mid her tangled ringlets
 The flickering sunbeams played ;
Sweet as the balmy summer,
 Pure as the snow was she ;
Fresh and fair as the field-flowers
 That lay upon her knee.

Anon, the foremost reaper
 Paused in his work and smiled,
On his deadly scythe he rested
 To talk with his winsome child ;
He noted the air of wonder
 Writ in her face, as a book,
And questioned her on her silence—
 Her rapt and far-off look.

“ Last eve I was at the church, father,
And a good man told us there
Of the harvest-home at the end of the world,
And the angel-reapers fair ;
And now, I was just a wondering
When the end of the world would come,
And the Lord of the earth's great harvest
Would gather His children home.

“ And whether the angels who took us
To Heaven from earth away,
Would be those who loved and watched us
While treading life's weary way :
If they only loved me, and smiled, father,
As you ever are wont to do ;
I wouldn't mind when they took me—
Took me to mother and you.”

“ My child, there is a harvest,”
And he wiped a tear away,—
“ A harvest God is reaping—
Reaping every day ;
And we do well to think of it—
Think of it morn and even,
That, when the angels come for us,
We may be fit for Heaven.

“ When they reaped our own dear mother—
Reaped her on that sad day
When her new-born babe, like a lily,
On her silent bosom lay ;
'Twas only because He loved her,
And would have her near to Him,
And teach us to look to Heaven
From a world more drear and dim.”

Ah ! little thought that reaper,
As he talked with his winsome child,
That the angels fair would have reaped *her*
'Ere another harvest smiled ;
And little he thought, had they done so,
He could kneel by the heaped-up sod,
And look to Heaven, through the blinding tears,
With unshaken faith in God.

But little blind man knoweth
The trials that to life belong ;
How his strength is turned to weakness—
His weakness rendered strong ;
For 'tis in the school of suffering
God teaches man his place ;
And maketh our human frailty
Witness the might of grace.

On the face of that lonely reaper
The look is not all pain,
As the thought of that by-gone harvest
Comes back to him again ;
As under the hazel hedgerow
A soft voice speaks to him there,
Of the harvest-home at the end of the world,
And the angel reapers fair.

.





Art in Nature.

AUTUMN is in the green-wood,
Autumn is on the lea ;
With pencil and with pigments,
A prince of painters he ;
With touches of crimson and scarlet,
And gold, and green, and gray,
He lights up the fading forest
With a smile that mocks decay.

Through the leafy glades he passes—
By the broad stream as it flows,
And flingeth abroad his colours,
All reckless, as he goes ;
He kindles the rock's dark summit
With the sunset's crimson glow,
Till it gleams, all bright with a thousand hues,
From the crystal lake below.

He skirts the gloomy forest—
Enters its solemn aisles,
Where rarely a single blossom
The darksome scene beguiles ;
And he paints the silent arches
Till they blazon their bannered pride,
Like the walls of some vast cathedral
When a noble chief hath died.

O'er all the varied landscape
 He works his own sweet will ;
He wanders adown the valley—
 He climbs the wood-crowned hill ;
From the lordly elm by the wayside
 To the creeper at its feet,
Wherever his fond hand lingers,
 Fresh charms the vision greet.

As we tread in his silent footsteps,
 And follow his traces fair,
Read we no deeper meaning
 In the pictured scenes so fair ?
From the works of this grand old master
 That have hung from year to year
In the corridors of Nature,
 Shall we gather no hope or cheer ?

The poet may pay the painter
For his pictures fair in rhyme;
But not for the truths they teach him—
Truths holy and sublime ;
“ That the charm of a loving spirit
Parts not with the parting breath ;
That even decay may be beautiful,
And glory linked with death.”





A Romance of Christmas Eve.

IT was the eve of Christmas, and the hall
Was one broad blaze of light ;
A thousand tapers, gleaming white and tall
From the wrought sconces on the gilded wall,
Had banished night.

And many a haughty peer and beauteous dame
Did grace the festive scene ;
But nought to me was fair until *she* came—
She who had filled my soul with love's pure flame,
My heart's true queen.

Serenely beautiful o'er all she shone
 Within that stately hall ;
As to its centre lures the stars the sun,
She had a sweet, constraining grace that won
 The hearts of all.

She was the cynosure of every eye
 In all that courtly crowd ;
Broad lands were hers, and lineage high
And titles old,—and I,—oh, what was I ?
 I groaned aloud.

This noble scion of a race of earls
 Could I e'er hope to gain ?
This cup of bliss, in which such costly pearls
Had been dissolved, at which thought whirls,
 Could these lips drain ?

Ah, vain all obstacles which interpose
 When Love aspires ;
As yield to Summer's heat the Winter snows,
So melts each icy barrier where glows
 His fiercer fires.

But, lo ! she comes, her merry train among,
 And how supremely fair !
On me she looks, on me, 'mid all that throng ;
Then, oh, what bliss was mine, poor child of song !
 I trod on air.

We stand apart amid those proud domains,
 We talk of early days ;
Of golden memories that knew no pains,
When she did never weary of my strains—
 I of her praise.

Then, as she drooped and blushed, I lost
All power of self-control,
Like a frail vessel by the wild winds toss'd
And driven headlong on a rock-bound coast :
I poured forth all my soul.

I claimed her as my love's high guerdon due,
And dared to give the sign ;
Beneath the mistletoe, which o'er us threw
Her glistening berries to the light, I drew
Her lips to mine.

It was a momentary madness ; soon
I woke, as if from sleep ;
And forth I went into the night's still noon,
With none above me but the silent moon
To see me weep.

And as I wept sad tears of grief and shame,
I heard the sound of bells ;
Upon the cool, crisp air they sweetly came,
As spirits sent to quench my bosom's flame
From far-off cells.

And then I knew 'twas holy Christmas-tide,
And, lo ! all conflicts cease ;
I asked of Him who calmed the waters wide
A will subdued, a spirit purified,
A mind at peace.

And forth I went into the world again,
Chastened, subdued, but strong ;
Taught by the spirit of a conquered pain
To cheer the drooping hearts of weary men
With fuller song.



The Wreathers.

'TIS Christmas ! the old church tower
Is draped in drifted snow ;
The broad-faced clock chimes out the hour
With solemn voice and slow ;
Glistening and white the ivy leaves
Which wrap the ancient wall,
Icicles hang from the mossy eaves,
And the frost its silver filigree weaves
On panes where the sunbeams fall.

By the gray old porch is a band
• Of old and young and fair,
And a wide-wheeled wagon brought to a stand
 With its goodly burden there ;
These are the wreathers, come away
 A mile o'er the frozen sod,
To deck with holly and laurel and bay,
On the whole year's best and brightest day,
 The hallowed courts of God.

Thank God ! our nation's faith
 Is not a thing of to-day ;
Our sleeping sires were true to the death,
 And we would be as they :
We deck the shrines which they arrayed,
 We sing the strains they loved ;
We pray the very prayers they prayed,
By the sacred spots where their bones are laid—
 In the courts in which they moved.

Merrily, merrily, now they twine
The bands of glistening green,
Whilst here and there the berries shine,
Blood-red, and white between :
Up and down the dim old aisles,
Pulpit, pillar, and wall ;
Never, I ween, in its palmiest day,
Had that hoar old Church been drest more gay, —
They wreathed them one and all.

Brightest 'mid that bright band
Whose busy fingers ply,
A group of three little wreathers stand,
Laboring earnestly ;
She with the dark and flowing hair,—
She with the laughing eyes,—
She with the golden ringlets, where,
Nesting still and soft and fair,
A sunlight ever lies.

Whilst you are busy here,
 Fair little wreathers three,
With light and shade, in another sphere,
 Is wreathing your destiny :
You may call it an idle dream—
 A vision—or what you will,
But a glimpse of your future life I seem
To catch by the aid of this loitering beam
 From this moulded window-sill.

She with the sunny hair,
 And pale and dreamy brow,
Shall deck no more with fillets fair
 A mouldering fane below ;
Away, away in the spirit-land
 'Ere another Christmas shines,
I see her one of the sainted band,
With fadeless palm in deathless hand,
 In Heaven's holier shrines.

She with the laughing eyes—
The sweet and ringing voice,
Bidding, like song from summer skies,
Earth's wearied ones rejoice ;
I see—I see the bright eyes dim—
Dim with the welling tears,
Yet full of the heaven-born joy which springs
From the depths of earthly sorrows,
In the gloom of after years.

She with the darksome eyes,
And calm and steadfast gaze,
With a faith unmoved by a thousand shocks,
Looks back on those young days ;
She gave to her God her green young life
With its wealth of yearning love ;
Now, a gray-haired woman, a widowed wife,
Weary and worn with the lengthened strife,
He cheers her from above.

Wreathe on in faith and love !
 'Tis not for you to know
What fate is wreathing for you above,
 While you wreathe on below :
But the daily deeds your hands may do,
 The paths your feet have trôd,
May gloom, or glory bring to you
 Above or 'neath the sod :
Here, in life's fair but chequered scene,
See that each heart be drest and green,
 A temple meet for God.





Last Christmas and This.

“LAST Christmas,” said a grandsire gray,
“ Around this cheerful hearth,
Were gathered, on that festive day,
All I loved best on earth :
This Christmas lay my staff aside,
Remove my vacant chair,
I would not have that joy the less
I may no longer share.”

“ Last Christmas,” sighed a widow lone,
 “ My husband smiled on me,
And stroked the curly-headed child
 That climbed upon my knee :
This Christmas both dear forms lie chill,
 Beneath their shroud of snow,
And nothing but my Father’s will
 Detains me now below.”

•
“ Last Christmas,” sang a fair young bride,
 “ There was one silent chord
Unheard amid the swelling tide
 Of praise so freely poured :
This Christmas every tuneful string
 Resounds with thankful glee,
And gladly to my God I give
 The child He gives to me.”

“ Last Christmas,” prayed a meek-eyed boy,
 “ I loved but earthly things ;
I tasted not that deeper joy
 This holy season brings :
This Christmas, Lord, I fain would be
 Less fond of self and play :
More like to Him who came to free
 This sin-bound world to-day.”

Last Christmas was the church o'erhung
 With wreaths of living green ;
Sweet were the holy anthems sung,
 And bright the sacred scene :
This Christmas many hands are still
 That wove those garlands gay,—
Many the lips, which once could thrill,
 Now passed from earth away.

From Christmastide to Christmastide

Snows fall, and melt away ;

From Christmastide to Christmastide

We weep, and watch, and pray :

Earth's joys are few, brief are her smiles,

Yet is the church still seen,

Sweet singing 'mid her wreathed aisles,

“ Heaven's joys are evergreen ! ”.





Seasons of Prayer.

BRIGHT beams the blushing morn,
The night has flown away ;
Fair flowers the fields adorn,
The sunbeams brightly play ;
The lark's song, sweet and clear,
Rings through the balmy air ;
Now, meekly drawing near,
How sweet the hour of prayer !

'Tis noon ! the drooping flowers
Look faint—the brook is dry ;
The sun's exhausting powers
The face of Nature try ;
To yonder river's brink
The thirsting flocks repair :
So, when thy spirits sink,
Go, seek thy God in prayer !

'Tis ev'ning's holy hour !
All Nature whispers peace :
Closed is each dewy flower—
The world's loud murmurs cease :
Now in this calm so sweet,
When all around is fair,
Bow lowly at the mercy-seat,`
Pour forth thy soul in pray'r !

Thus in the morn of life,
And at its noon and eve,
Whatever storms be rife—
Whatever make thee grieve,—
Oft steal from earth away,
Its sorrows and its care,
And let each passing day
Be sanctified by prayer.





In Memoriam, C. C. D.

ONLY a memory now ; but a memory tender and dear,
For the bitterness now hath passed, and left but the sweetness here ;
Only a memory now, the bloom of a deep-rooted sorrow
But slowly unfolding on earth, to welcome the glorious to-morrow.

Only a memory now ; yes, only a sweet girl-face ;
But the eloquent, earnest eyes will speak throughout all time and
space ;
Will speak to us now more plainly than they did in the days gone by,
As the shrouding mists uprise which lay, as a cloud, between earth
and sky.

Only a memory now,—the freshness that follows the shower ;
The delicate essence distilled from the cup of the bruised flower ;
Only a memory now,—the dawning that follows the night,
The peace-giving star of the morning, bringing in comfort and light.

Only a memory now ; but ling'ring the long years through ;
Uplifting to holier aims, and efforts more loving and true :
Yes, only a memory now, intermingled too often with pain,
Till the Father re-knitteth the severed strands, and gives us our dar-
ling again.



